

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CARACA 00698 241600Z

ACTION ARA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 ARAE-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 /026 W

-----241652Z 023758 /44

P 241508Z JAN 77

FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6332

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 0698

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP, PFOR, VE

SUBJECT: MINISTER OF MINES COMMENTS ON STATE VISIT

1. MINISTER OF MINES VALENTIN HERNANDEZ INVITED ME TO HIS OFFICE ON JANUARY 21 TO DISCUSS A PRESIDENTIAL VISIT TO WASHINGTON. HERNANDEZ SAID THAT HE, THE FOREIGN MINISTER AND MINISTERS PEREZ GUERRERO AND CARMELO LAURIA HAD BEEN DESIGNATED BY PRESIDENT PEREZ AS SOMETHING OF A TASK FORCE TO PREPARE FOR THE FORTHCOMING STATE VISIT. THESE MINISTERS EXPECT TO ACCOMPANY THE PRESIDENT ON ANY VISIT. HERNANDEZ WOULD OF COURSE BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FIELD OF ENERGY AND OIL. HE SAID HE HAD DESIGNATED A MEMBER OF HIS STAFF, MARIANO GURFINKEL, TO BEGIN TO ORGANIZE MATERIAL FOR THE VISIT, AND HE WOULD LIKE TO ESTABLISH DIRECT LIAISON WITH THE EMBASSY TO EXCHANGE IDEAS AND THOUGHTS. I TOLD HIM THAT PETROLEUM ATTACHE KNICKMEYER WOULD BE GURFINKEL'S CONTACT, AND THAT I WOULD LIKEWISE KEEP IN TOUCH WITH GURFINKEL.

2. THE MINISTER SAID THAT HE BELIEVED THAT IN ANY STATE VISIT, IT WOULD BE IMPORTANT TO LAY OUT FRANKLY FOR THE US HOW THE GOV SAW THE OIL PICTURE, BOTH INTERNATIONALLY AND WITH RESPECT TO VENEZUELA, WHAT ITS
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PROJECTIONS WERE AND WHAT IT SAW AS FUTURE ISSUES. HE SAID THAT IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR THE GOV NOT ONLY TO DECIDE "WHAT IT MAY WANT, BUT ALSO WHAT IT IS PREPARED TO GIVE". HE SAID MUCH INTERNAL CONSIDERATION OF THESE ITEMS WAS NEEDED. (IN THE COURSE OF THIS CONVERSATION THE MINISTER MADE SEVERAL INTERESTING GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ABOUT PETROLEUM AND THE CURRENT

SITUATION WHICH I AM REPORTING SEPARATELY.)

3. THE MINISTER SHOWED CLEAR RELUCTANCE WHEN I ASKED IF HE STILL PLANNED TO MAKE A VISIT TO THE US PRIOR TO THE STATE VISIT TO MEET THE NEW US APPOINTEES IN THE ENERGY FIELD. I GATHER HE DOES NOT NOW PLAN TO DO SO. I SUGGESTED TO THE MINISTER THAT HE MAY WISH TO CONSIDER SENDING SOME OF HIS EXPERTS TO WASHINGTON AT AN EARLY OPPORTUNITY TO HOLD CONVERSATIONS WITH APPROPRIATE US OFFICIALS. A FRANK EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON OIL WAS ALWAYS A GOOD IDEA, BUT IN ADVANCE OF A STATE VISIT IT MIGHT BE ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT AS A PRELUDE TO CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO CHIEFS OF STATE. SUCH EXPLORATIONS COULD SERVE TO IDENTIFY THE POINTS OF VIEWS OF BOTH GOVERNMENTS, ESTABLISH THE PARAMETERS OF POSSIBLE DISCUSSIONS AND UNCOVER BOTH ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES. THIS MIGHT ALSO AVOID SURPRISES (OR LOST OPPORTUNITIES) THAT MIGHT COME UP IN DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN THE TWO PRINCIPALS IF THEY SIMPLY TAKE UP THE TOPIC "COLD". THE MINISTER SAID HE WOULD LIKE TO THINK ABOUT THAT AND TO TALK TO THE PRESIDENT.

4. COMMENT: IT IS CLEAR THAT THE PRESIDENT IS TAKING A POTENTIAL STATE VISIT VERY SERIOUSLY AND IS DOING SOME SERIOUS PLANNING FOR IT. IT IS ALSO CLEAR THAT OIL WILL BE AT THE HEART OF ANY DISCUSSIONS AND A KEY ELEMENT IN ANY SUCH VISIT. WE WILL OF COURSE KEEP IN TOUCH WITH GURFINKEL AND THE MINISTER AND KEEP TABS ON THEIR THINKING.
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HOWEVER, I BELIEVE WE SHOULD CONSIDER THE POSSIBILITY OF SOME ADVANCE EXPLORATIONS ON THIS SUBJECT IN WASHINGTON BETWEEN APPROPRIATE US OFFICIALS AND GOV EXPERTS FOR THE PURPOSES AND REASONS I OUTLINED TO THE MINISTER. I WOULD APPRECIATE THE DEPARTMENT'S REACTION TO THE ABOVE AND ANY GUIDANCE IT MAY WISH TO GIVE ME.
VAKY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: ENERGY, PETROLEUM, CHIEF OF STATE VISITS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 24-Jan-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977CARACA00698
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770025-0347
Format: TEL
From: CARACAS
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770125/aaaaawdh.tel
Line Count: 104
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 8e282bd2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 31-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3524919
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MINISTER OF MINES COMMENTS ON STATE VISIT
TAGS: OVIP, PFOR, VE
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/8e282bd2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009